

*Life is beautiful --
an experience taken
for granted 'til lost.*

(Haiku by Mari Serebrov, 1973)



Win Rockefeller: *A Life Well-Lived*

As we come to grips with the death of Win Rockefeller, many of us have been reminded of moments shared with the lieutenant governor – moments that, once taken for granted, now capsule our thoughts, feelings, and experience of a man who championed our causes and supported our efforts at DWE. In paying tribute to the lieutenant governor, we've asked DWE staff to share those moments, be they personal or professional.

As a young law student, John Wyvill had to attend a Mid-South trade meeting luncheon. Arriving late, he didn't see many vacant chairs at the tables scattered throughout the room. "You can sit with us," a man offered from behind him. John turned around to see Win making a space for him at a table he shared with a representative from the French Embassy and several other dignitaries. Throughout the meal, Win moved effortlessly from French to English as he engaged everyone in the conversation, including John.

"He was just as interested in finding out about me as he was in pursuing his trade talks with the French Embassy," John said. "That's the kind of man he was – interested in everything and everyone around him."

That was the first time John met the man who would become lieutenant governor. As they both sought ways to serve the state, their paths often crossed, especially when John became commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Win went out of his way to encourage those with disabilities and was a familiar figure at ARS events.

Juaniece Ammons, director's office, remembers him speaking at the annual ARS open house held in conjunction with Employ People with Disabilities Month in October. His words of encouragement sprang from his own experience as a parent raising two children with disabilities. "Those were very touching remarks that he made that day," Juaniece says. "They were very sincere and heartfelt."

"I only met the lieutenant governor a few times, but my impressions were lasting ones," Carl Enna, ARS, says. "He was a genuine, warm, caring, considerate 'everyday Joe.'"

"It was obvious he was intelligent, but he was worldly too – and not only in style and grace, but in charm and demeanor. You could tell he'd be just as comfortable, and maybe more so, in jeans and boots as he would be in black tie and tails.

"He had that special quality of making you feel at ease and comfortable in his presence. He was a true state treasure whose loss will be felt."

Always an advocate for those who couldn't help themselves or who needed an extra shot of encouragement, Win also championed our adult education programs. "Lt. Gov. Rockefeller was always sup-

Making Memories: Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller reads to some young students at the annual Celebrate Literacy event in the Capitol Rotunda. Tackling illiteracy was just one of the causes he embraced.



portive of our programs and willing to be of service whenever and however he could,” Janice Hanlon, GED, says. “On several occasions he served as master of ceremonies at the Celebrate Literacy program when he recognized the top 25 GED graduates for that year. During the ceremony he would also read a story to the children who were invited to the ceremony.

“When he spoke at the GED Examiners’ Conference two years ago, he was very complimentary of the work of our adult education and GED testing programs in Arkansas and seemed very empathetic and compassionate to our clients.”

Tambra Nicholson, GED, was involved in several activities at which the lieutenant governor spoke, but she only got to meet him once. That was at a gala function during the Arkansas Literary Festival about three years ago, and it was enough to make a lifelong impression. She was surprised at how approachable and down-to-earth he was. “He held conversation like he’s in line at Wal-Mart,” Tambra said. “That’s what struck me.”

Although she had met the lieutenant governor at adult education and political functions, the most memorable moment for Mari Serebrov, communications, was a private one. She and her husband were throwing a going-away party for their son, who was leaving for the Coast Guard, at the Star of India. Win and his family were there for dinner. “When Win saw us, he and a few of his sons came over to greet us,” Mari says. “He thanked Tommy for serving our country. Then he insisted that we come meet the rest of his family. His presence made it a special sendoff for Tommy.”

When Mari informed Tommy of Win’s death, he wrote, “That is quite sad. He seemed like a very grounded individual despite his wealth. It is rare to find such a person.”

Bob Treviño, ARS, has worked closely with the lieutenant governor on several issues over the years and counted him as a friend. “To many, Win Paul Rockefeller’s birthright made him a Goliath among men,” Bob says. “But to those of us who had the great fortune to know him, it was his magnificent heart that made him such a colossus. He was a gentle soul who personified dignity, grace, and charm in an era often indifferent to those qualities. He gave hope to our state and never asked anything of us but the opportunity to serve his fellow Arkansan. His generosity served to remind us that kindness and justice sustain those whose lives are challenged by a disability.

“Although we mourn the loss of our dear friend and struggle to understand the mystery of Almighty God, we can’t help but notice how much brighter heaven appears for Win Paul Rockefeller is now part of the ages. Vaya con Dios, my dear and faithful friend. We will miss you.”

As we mourn the passing of a great Arkansan, a selfless public servant, and a friend, we can be assured that his legacy will live on – in the lives he has touched and through the opportunities he helped create for future generations. Sir Winston Churchill once said: “We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”

For Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller, life was truly about giving – of his money, his time, and, even more importantly, his compassion and friendship.